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The Role of Youth Work in Afghan Immigrants' Settlement and Integration in the UK

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Abstract

In our increasingly interconnected world, Afghan immigrants seek refuge, opportunities, and a better life in the United Kingdom and face complex challenges in pursuing this new beginning. This study explores the multifaceted role of youth work in aiding the settlement and integration of young Afghan immigrants in the UK. Drawing on youth work values and principles, relevant strategy and policy, and National Occupational Standards for Youth Work (NOSYW) (National Occupational Standards for Youth Work, 2019), this research investigates the alignment of youth work with the objectives of facilitating Afghan immigrants' settlement and integration.

The study employs an empirical qualitative approach and utilizes social capital theory as a theoretical framework to understand the factors influencing successful integration and settlement. Social capital theory emphasizes the significance of social connections, networks, and resources in shaping individuals' social and economic well-being. By thoroughly exploring the experiences of young Afghan immigrants within the context of youth work, this study aims to identify the specific obstacles they face in the UK and offer insights for practitioners, policymakers, and institutions in order to support them. The research questions seek to uncover whether youth work facilitates settlement and integration, identify key success factors, pinpoint barriers to integration, and provide evidence-based recommendations for future practice. The research provides a comprehensive analysis of the diverse forms of capital (social, cultural, and human) that impact the settlement process, considering the intersectionality of identities and the broader socio-economic context. Research findings suggest that mental health, English language, and financial challenges are barriers to settlement and integration. Furthermore, findings suggest that limited understanding by youth workers of the religious and cultural needs of Afghan

immigrants creates further barriers. Other findings tell us that trust and consistency by youth workers is critical in supporting immigrants effectively. Isolation and disjointed support act as further barriers. Protective factors and strengths offered by youth workers include sports activities which support English language skills and relationship building. Recommendations include for educational institutions to increase teaching on cultural diversity within Youth and Community training, for youth workers to learn about culture and religion as well as background before intervening with Afghan young people and for youth workers to consider how young Afghans may be able to feedback about their experiences. Recommendations for the Government include improving housing and policies that promote Afghan integration. Recommendations to communities include the adoption of intercultural activities. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to the ongoing efforts to support the settlement and integration journey of Afghan immigrants in the UK.

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Chapter 1

1.1. Introduction

In our tumultuous but interconnected global context people are crossing borders, seeking a better life, and reshaping society. Among the diverse tapestry of migrants seeking refuge, opportunities, and a better life, Afghan immigrants stand as a resilient group whose journey to the United Kingdom reflects both the complexities of their homeland's history and the challenges they face in their pursuit of a new beginning. As they traverse the intricate path of settlement and integration in a foreign land, youth work emerges as a potentially important force that may not only aid in their acculturation but also shape the very fabric of their identity within a new societal context.

Change in Afghanistan, a nation marked by decades of conflict, political turmoil, and economic instability, has forced countless people to seek refuge far beyond their homeland's borders (Collins, 2011). The United Kingdom, known for its multiculturalism and tradition of providing sanctuary to those in need, has become a destination for many Afghans seeking solace and opportunity (Asari, Halikiopoulou and Mock, 2008). The number of Afghan individuals known to have entered the UK on small boats via the English Channel stands at 494 (2020), 1437 (2021), and 8633 (2022). This highlights one dimension of social capital information networks. Afghan migrants might rely on information from social connections who have successfully made the journey before. These connections might provide insights into the journey's challenges, potential risks, and opportunities (Vergani et al., 2021). The process of integration into a society vastly different from their own is a multifaceted endeavour

that requires support beyond policy measures alone (Scholten and Penninx, 2016). This is where youth work emerges, offering a dynamic platform through which young Afghan immigrants can navigate the complex landscape of adaptation, understanding, and belonging.

1.2. Research Context Aims and Questions

In essence, this study delves into the multifaceted dimensions of the role of youth work in the settlement and integration of Afghan immigrants in the UK. It explores the experiences of young Afghan immigrants in the UK within the context of youth work programs, with a focus on understanding whether youth work facilitated settlement and integration. It seeks to identify both the key factors contributing to the success of youth work interventions for this demographic and the primary challenges and barriers that may hinder effectiveness. Furthermore, the study examines the specific obstacles to settlement and integration faced by Afghan immigrants, particularly youth, in the UK. Ultimately, the research aims to offer evidence-based recommendations targeting youth work practitioners, policymakers, and relevant institutions, providing insights on how to optimally support the settlement and integration journey of young Afghan immigrants in the UK.

1.3. The Research Aims

1. To explore the experiences of young Afghan immigrants in the UK with youth work programs, and to identify the ways in which youth work can support their settlement and integration.

   1. To identify the key factors that contribute to the success of youth work interventions for young Afghan immigrants in the UK.

2. To identify the key challenges and barriers that effect the efficacy of youth work interventions for young Afghan immigrants in the UK.

3. To examine the barriers to settlement and integration for Afghan immigrants in the UK, with a focus on the experiences of young people.

4. To provide evidence-based recommendations for youth work practitioners, policymakers, and other institutions on how to best support the settlement and integration of young Afghan immigrants in the UK.

1.4.   The Research Questions

1.   How does Youth Work facilitate the settlement and integration of young Afghan immigrants in the UK?

2.   What are the key factors that contribute to its success?

3.   What are the barriers to the settlement and integration of Afghan immigrants in the UK?

4.   What are the recommendations for future practice?

1.5.   Rationale and Position

The rationale for this study has two main aspects Firstly, as an Afghan, I understand that Afghan immigrants in the UK face significant challenges when they try to make a new life here. I also know that just settlement is not enough to make them feel like they belong. The second reason I have undertaken this study is because I believe that youth work can help with these challenges. Youth work prioritises being inclusive, giving power to people, and helping them grow in all areas of their lives. This way of working reflects the needs of Afghan immigrants.

So, my research explores how youth work can help Afghan immigrants settle and integrate in the UK. I will gather information and make evidence informed suggestions to help people who work with young Afghan immigrants help Afghans do their best in their new home.

To answer the research questions, I had to place myself in the society and environment of the UK in which youth immigrants live. This assists me in identifying the actors and structures involved in their lives and understanding how they influence their integration and settlement in the community.

As I am Afghan, I understand the challenges that many other Afghans experience. I believe that knowing the experiences of young Afghan immigrants and what helps or makes things difficult is very important. By identifying the factors contributing to success and the barriers hindering the effectiveness of such programs, my research aims to pave the way for more informed, strategic, and targeted approaches to youth work in support of Afghan immigrants' settlement and integration. The findings will offer recommendations grounded in empirical evidence, thereby providing valuable insights for youth workers, policy makers, and institutions, ensuring that the settlement and integration journey of young Afghan immigrants in the UK is as smooth and successful as possible.

1.6. Methodology

I employ a qualitative methodological approach and use social capital theory as a theoretical framework. Social capital theory has its roots in sociology and social sciences and has been developed and refined by several scholars over the years. Social capital refers to the resources, networks and relationships that individuals and

communities have access to, positively impacting their social and economic well-being (Condry and Miles, 2012). While the concept of social capital can be traced back to earlier works, the modern theory of social capital emerged in the late 20th century. Bourdieu (1983) introduced the notion of "social capital" as a part of his broader theory of cultural and social reproduction. His work was developed by Nan Lin (1990) and both theorists' ideas are developed further in the literature review and methodology chapters.

Using capital theory as a framework offers a comprehensive and multidimensional analysis of the factors influencing the successful integration of Afghan people. This helps to identify the diverse forms of capital, social, cultural, and human, that play a crucial role in shaping experiences and outcomes (Carmen et al., 2022).By understanding the barriers and resources that impact their settlement process, policymakers and youth workers can design tailored interventions and support to enhance capital assets, taking into account the intersectionality of people's identities and the broader socio-economic context.

Accessing participants via professional networks, I undertook semi structured interviews with four young people (aged 18 years +) and two youth workers. Participants derived from both Wales and England.

1.7. Definition of Key Terms

The term "youth work" encompasses a diverse array of activities, initiatives and programmes aimed at nurturing the holistic development of young individuals within a community (NYA, 2023).It goes beyond formal education, providing spaces for personal growth, skill enhancement, and social interaction. When applied to the context of Afghan immigrants in the UK, youth work takes on a profound significance.

It has the potential to serve as a bridge between the heritage they carry and the new culture they encounter (Creative Youth Network, 2021). It offers young people aged 11 to 25 years a unique opportunity to preserve and celebrate their Afghan identity while simultaneously fostering a sense of belonging to their adopted homeland.

An asylum seeker is someone "who has arrived in a country and asked for asylum. Until they receive a decision as to whether or not they are a refugee, they are known as an asylum seeker" (Refugee Action, 2023). On gaining status in the country, they have travelled to an asylum seeker becomes a refugee. This has a different legal status. The term "Refugees" stands for people who cross international borders in search of safety after fleeing an armed conflict or persecution (Amnesty International, 2016). and are allowed to stay in their new country as it is unsafe to return. The 1951 Refugee Convention accords them protection and international recognition (Phillip, 2016). In contrast, the term migrants or immigrants refers to people who can safely return to their native nations because they have moved for reasons such as employment, education, or family reunion. Conflating the words can have major ramifications for the lives and safety of refugees because the legal and protection frameworks for migrants and refugees are different (UNHCR United Kingdom, 2023). The distinction between the phrase migrant and refugee highlights how crucial it is to use these terms accurately. Public perceptions also play a significant role in shaping attitudes and policies surrounding these terms. It is worth noting that public understanding of these terms can vary widely and might not always align with legal definitions (Graf et al., 2023).

"Integration" means fitting in and getting involved in a new place, but it does not have just one meaning. When we talk about refugee integration, we are talking about refugees becoming a real part of their new community (Hynie, 2018).

There is no agreed academic definition of settlement. It does not have a legal status. It is a difficult concept to define and is contested, with different people perceiving this in different ways (IOM UN Migration, 2023). IOM describes the settlement as "settling in a country of first asylum, and eventually being granted the nationality of that country" (IOM UN Migration, 2023) .

For the purposes of this study, I define settlement as moving to a new country or community and feeling able to live there with relative ease, i.e., having access to resources, networks, and support. This can be a temporary thing, but it differs from integration which is a more permanent state where you feel at home. Integration feels permanent, and settlement feels temporary.

"Resettlement" is described as a special way to help refugees and vulnerable people from other countries. It's a way for them to start a new life when they cannot go back to their own country. Resettlement also shows that different countries are working together to help refugees, especially when some countries have a lot of refugees. It is like giving a fresh start to people who wouldn't have a home or a country of their own otherwise (IOM UN Migration, 2023).

For the purposes of this study when discussing young people aged 11 to 25 years, as per the definition used in England and Wales, I use the term youth. This is because it is the most used word to describe young people in Afghanistan (Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2023).

When discussing people who have travelled from Afghanistan to other countries, I use the general term immigrant to describe all, regardless of the different status that is applied to different groups of people, i.e., asylum seeker, refugee, ARAP, ACRS and others. When discussing specific groups, I use specific relevant terms.

1.8. Chapter overview

Chapter 2 is the theoretical framework and literature review that examines dominant themes, concepts, research findings and ideas from literature related to this topic. Themes considered are: Global migration from Afghanistan, Routes and Modes of Afghan Migration to the UK, Types of Afghan immigration, Current Residence, Integration and settlement, Challenges that Afghan Immigrants face when integrating and settling in the UK, Role of Youth Work in supporting Afghan Immigrant Integration in the UK, Supporting the Needs of Young Individuals, including Afghan Immigrants, through Youth Work, Challenges for Youth Work Supporting Immigrants in the UK and Social and public policy.

Chapter 3 explores the methodological framework. This explains that I undertook empirical primary data collection within a social capital theoretical framework and used semi-structured interviews as my main data collection tool with both young people, aged 18 years plus and youth workers in England and Wales.

Chapter 4 reports and discusses the findings emerging from the data collection with Afghan young people and professionals. These are analysed thematically.

Chapter 5 offers conclusions and makes recommendations in these areas: community, Government, Educational institutions, general, and Youth work.

Chapter 2

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The dynamics of migration and integration represent complex processes influenced by multifaceted factors, including historical events, geopolitical shifts, and social networks. In this chapter, I provide a comprehensive mapping of the Afghan migration narrative within the context of the United Kingdom. I explore the historical backdrop of Afghanistan's relationship with Britain, tracing the diverse pathways through which Afghans arrive in the UK. I delve into the challenges faced by Afghan immigrants during their settlement and integration, shedding light on economic hurdles, language barriers, and the critical issue of mental health. Additionally, I examine the role of youth work in supporting young Afghan immigrants and addressing the challenges they encounter.

I discuss the broader social and public policies, including the "hostile environment" approach. The goal of a hostile environment policy is to create a situation where individuals who do not have legal permission to stay in the country face significant challenges and barriers in their daily lives, ultimately encouraging them to leave and discouraging others from coming. Finally, I explore the complex relationship between poverty and anti-immigration/ asylum seekers/refugees' sentiments, considering the economic and social factors that influence attitudes toward immigration. This chapter aims to offer a comprehensive overview of the factors, policies, and challenges that shape the lives of Afghan individuals and families seeking refuge and a fresh start in the UK.

Social capital theory (Bordieu, 1983; Nan Lin, 2001) is a useful framework for understanding the dynamics of migration, integration, and the development of diverse societies. This theory posits that social networks, relationships, and connections have inherent value and can lead to beneficial outcomes for individuals and communities (Bourdieu, 1983; Lin, 2001). Social capital theory can be broken down into three main components: bonding social capital, bridging social capital, and linking social capital (GARIP, 2008) .Social capital refers to the resources, networks, and relationships that individuals and communities have access to, which can positively impact their social and economic well-being (Lin, 2001). While the concept of social capital can be traced back to earlier works, the modern theory of social capital emerged in the late 20th century. Pierre Bourdieu (1983) introduced the notion of "social capital" as a part of his broader theory of cultural and social reproduction. In his work, he emphasized the importance of social connections and networks in the distribution of resources and opportunities. Nan Lin (1990s), a Chinese American sociologist, made further notable contributions to the development of social capital theory. His work focused on social networks, social support, and the ways in which social capital influences individual outcomes (Lin, 2001). While Lin and Bourdieu approach social capital from different angles, there are common threads in their work. Both emphasize the importance of social connections and networks in influencing individual outcomes. Bourdieu's focus on how social capital contributes to the reproduction of social inequalities complements Lin's emphasis on how social capital can act as a resource for individual success. Both perspectives acknowledge the significance of social networks in shaping access to resources, opportunities, and information (Asquith, 2019).Hence, Bourdieu (1983) Social capital theory has influenced the thinking underpinning this literature review.

2.1 Overview of Afghan Immigration in the United Kingdom

2.1.1 Global Migration from Afghanistan

The recent surge in global migration from Afghanistan has become a focal point of international discourse, driven by a confluence of intricate geopolitical factors and urgent humanitarian considerations (Mohammadi, 2021). The country's decades-long conflicts, political instability, economic challenges, and the withdrawal of foreign troops have contributed to a significant displacement of Afghan citizens seeking safety and better prospects abroad. This migration phenomenon has sparked discussions among nations about how to address the pressing needs of Afghan refugees, while also grappling with the potential security and social implications that arise from the movement of people across borders. The international community is faced with the task of navigating this complex situation, striving to balance the rights and well-being of migrants with the broader geopolitical context in which these migrations occur (Amnesty International, 2019).

We can observe the role of social networks, relationships, and connections in the migration process (Baillot et al., 2023). Afghan citizens, seeking safety and better prospects abroad, might rely on their social capital, networks of mutual acquaintances, recognition, and even group membership, to navigate this challenging journey. These networks can provide information, support, and resources that enhance their ability to access opportunities in foreign lands (Ryan, 2011). Bourdieu (1986) sheds light on the importance of these networks in such migration scenarios (Häuberer, 2011). Afghan migrants, often facing precarious conditions and unfamiliar environments, draw upon their social connections to gain access to resources, both tangible and intangible. In this context, the possession of social capital acts as a form of collective-owned capital,

providing individuals with a "credential" that enables them to seek credit and support within their new host societies (Vergani et al., 2021).

The historical context of Afghanistan's diplomatic relations with Britain and its impact on migration sheds light on the complexities of global movement perspective. The first diplomatic relationship between Britain and Afghanistan was established with the opening of the Afghanistan embassy in London which become operational in 1922 (Drephal, 2019). This historical linkage forms a foundation for understanding how social networks were formed and cultivated over time, contributing to the movement of Afghan immigrants. These networks facilitate interactions, information exchange, and mutual support, demonstrating the principle of social capital as "resources linked to possession of a durable network of relationships (Claridge, 2021).

The historical context of Afghan immigration to Australia during the 19th century, amid the ongoing rivalry between Britain and Russia, demonstrates the profound impact of social capital in shaping the integration and contribution of immigrant communities (Evason, 2023). Various degrees of institutionalized distribution of social capital are present within all social groups (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 193). One example is that of the Afghan Cameleers, a closely-knit community with a shared expertise in camel handling, who exemplify the essence of social capital theory (Evason, 2023). Through their collective knowledge and mutual relationships, they played a transformative role in Australia's infrastructural and economic development. By facilitating the efficient transportation of goods across Australia's challenging terrain, these Afghan immigrants harnessed their social capital to bridge geographical divides and contribute substantively to the nation's progress (Nasrat, 2022). Their effective collaboration underscores the theory's principle that social connections provide individuals with access to resources and support that can yield tangible benefits (Muijs et al., 2011).

Although Bourdieu (1983) asserts that the effects arising from having social or cultural capital can ultimately be linked to economic capital, the processes responsible for generating these various forms are distinct, also noted by (Portes 1998, p.4; Thieme, 2006).

Additionally, setting up businesses such as sheep stations and other enterprises further underscores the role of social capital in immigrant integration. These ventures allowed immigrants to embed themselves in the nation's economic fabric, driving growth and bridging gaps in the Australian frontier (Haider, 2019). Immigrants played a vital part in assisting British exploration of the desert interior of the country. This can be understood through the social capital framework as the collective-owned capital they obtained through their network, enabling them to establish and thrive in business endeavors (Sha, 2021). However, gender dynamics within this community also illustrate the limitations of social capital (GARIP, 2008). The prohibition against bringing wives to Australia for those working with camels resulted in a male-dominated Afghan community, highlighting how policies can shape and constrain social networks and their outcomes (Ewart, O'Donnell and Walding, 2022).

In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, and this led to wars within the country and large-scale displacement of people. Because of these wars, Afghanistan became one of the top three countries in the world where many people had to leave their homes and seek safety in other places (Rezaei, Adibi and Banham, 2021). Right now, more than 2.6 million Afghan people who had to leave Afghanistan are living in Iran and Pakistan. There are also many thousands of Afghans in 70 different countries, and Australia is one of them. (Sharifian et al., 2021).

In Canada, the resettlement of Afghan refugees is a complex process, and the government's handling of the situation has faced criticism (Government of Canada, 2023). However, the vow to relocate at least 40,000 Afghan refugees, on the other hand, demonstrates Canada's commitment to assisting those in need and giving a new home for those escaping conflict and persecution in Afghanistan (Government of Canada, 2023). Canada maintains an open-door immigration policy, a factor contributing to its distinction as the fastest-growing G7 nation (Triadafilopoulos, 2021). In addition, ongoing war, financial crises, and poverty have led to large-scale migration from Afghanistan to Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and Germany, for example, have been hosting Afghan refugees for over four decades and currently host over 2 million registered Afghan refugees (UNHCR United Kingdom, 2023).

2.1.2. Routes and Modes of Afghan Migration to the UK

In mid-August 2021, the Taliban, previously an Islamic militant group, became the de facto Government following a takeover of the country's political and state systems. Because of this, many diplomatic organizations and embassies, including UK and US representatives, left Afghanistan and evacuated their troops and allies (Maley and Jamal, 2022). In response to the crisis, the UK government announced the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy Scheme (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) in April 2021 (UK Gov, 2023) for the purpose of evacuation of Afghans who worked for the British people.

2.1.3. Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy Scheme (ARAP)

The ARAP scheme offers preferential relocation for individuals who were employed by or collaborated with the UK government in Afghanistan (GOV.UK, 2023). Afghan nationals eligible for UK relocation through ARAP can bring families who meet the ARAP criteria as determined by the Ministry of Defense and are deemed suitable for relocation by the Home Office (GOV.UK, 2023).

2.1.4. Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) serves those who have assisted UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech, and rule of law (UNHCR United Kingdom, 2023) through links with UK universities, Government or the British Council. The ACRS is considered one of the most ambitious humanitarian efforts in the world to date (GOV.UK, 2022) offering a secure and lawful avenue for some of Afghanistan's most vulnerable and high-risk individuals to seek refuge in the United Kingdom and reconstruct their futures. The government's pledge entails welcoming a maximum of 20,000 individuals facing peril through the ACRS (GOV.UK, 2023).

Afghans who have come to UK under different schemes are granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK, allowing them to live and work without time restrictions. Beneficiaries of these schemes have access to various benefits, including housing assistance, priority for social housing, the right to work, and eligibility to claim social benefits (Shelter England, 2023; Foreign Affairs Committee, 2022).

2.1.5. Other Types of Afghan Migration

In addition, there are other legal, illegal, and asylum-seeking routes to the UK. These support individuals who were evacuated or called forward to be evacuated as family members of British citizens or those who have been granted indefinite leave to remain, pre-flight Afghan family members of those granted refugee status, Afghans in the UK as visitors or temporary migrants on economic or study routes, Afghans claiming asylum in the UK and Afghans in the UK without immigration status (Home Office, 2023).

The implementation of migration pathways based on social connections introduces a complex dynamic where access to opportunities can be uneven. Inequitable social capital theory suggests that individuals with well-established networks are often better positioned to access resources and opportunities. Consequently, individuals who have engaged with Western institutions and possess robust social connections may find it relatively easier to secure resettlement opportunities (Asquith, 2019). In contrast, individuals with limited social connections might face challenges in navigating these pathways, leading to potential disparities in outcomes. ACRS serves as a prime example. This approach inherently recognizes the value of social capital—the connections formed with specific institutions such as British Council contractors, Garda World contractors, and Chevening alumni. These affiliations indicate a level of social capital that can translate into recommendations, referrals, and direct pathways (Home Office, 2021).

2.1.6. Current Residence

The Afghans individuals resettled under the ARAP and ACRS total 12,694 individuals who have been granted indefinite leave to remain. Currently, around 8,799 Afghans

reside in hotels or other types of temporary and serviced residences, while 9,968 Afghans have been granted permanent residency. In legal terms, Permanent Residence in the UK is called Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) (Morris, 2023; UK Gov, 2023), which grants an individual the right to live, work, and study in the UK on a permanent basis, free from immigration restrictions or limitations on their length of stay. However, ILR does not grant the same rights as British citizenship (GOV.UK, 2023).

Half of the residents in hotels and temporary accommodation are children, highlighting another facet of social capital. These numbers are subject to frequent change as new arrivals enter the UK and others transition to more permanent housing arrangements (Home Office, 2023). Additionally, around 1,200 individuals who have not accepted accommodation offers remain in temporary accommodation, some with valid justifications such as job offers or existing connections to certain areas (Home Office, 2023). This situation showcases the influence of existing connections, a fundamental aspect of social capital.

The number of Afghan individuals who are known to have entered the UK on small boats via the English Channel stand at 494 (2020), 1437 (2021) and 8633 (2022), highlights another dimension of social capital information networks. Afghan migrants might rely on information from social connections who have successfully made the journey before. These connections might provide insights into the journey's challenges, potential risks, and opportunities (Vergani et al., 2021).

2.2. Integration and Settlement

Integration as defined by Ager and Strang (2008), as associated with achievements in employment, housing, education, and in health opportunities; the perspectives and

implementation of citizenship and rights; the process of making social relationships with community groups; and the challenges posed by language, culture, and the local environment (Nourpanah, 2014). The term integration is reflected differently in academic and in policy structures (Ager and Strang, 2008). Integration, once seen as a one-way assimilation process for immigrants, is now understood to be influenced by interactions between migrants, residents, and institutions, as well as the availability of opportunities in the host society (Blanca & Penninx, 2016).

"Immigrants and refugees often need settlement services when they first arrive in a new country" claim (Omidvar and Richmond, 2013). In the case of Afghan refugees in the UK, the government cites ongoing plans to relocate Afghan refugees from hotels into their own houses. Afghan refugees residing in hotels are offered additional support to find settled accommodation on the condition they accept the first offer made to them. However, if they turn down the offer, they are not given a second alternative, potentially leaving them at risk of homelessness (Grierson & Syal, 2023). Despite the government's assertions that this plan aims to find "settled accommodation" for refugees, critics argue that it disrupts their lives, jobs, and support networks (Grierson & Syal, 2023). Immigrants generally prefer to live in area where they have easy access to the job market, facilitating the process of integration into society (Brell, Dustmann and Preston, 2020; The Migration Observatory, 2021; Sandberg, Fredholm and Frödin, 2023).

Afghan asylum seekers, specifically, face many challenges including uncertainty over their asylum status, limited access to education and work, financial constraints, isolation, and the psychological impact of their experiences (Safi, 2022). Many Afghan asylum seekers in the UK, face challenges, particularly women living in temporary housing, where they encounter domestic violence risks, lack of personal space and

privacy, and restrictions on their freedom. The slow process of providing permanent housing adds to their difficulties. The UK government is called upon to expedite long-term housing and support services to help them integrate into society and address their mental health needs. However, there have been concerns raised about the pace and effectiveness of the government's response in providing adequate support and resources for the evacuees (Human Right Watch, 2022).

2.3. Challenges that Afghan Immigrants Face when Settling and Integrating in the UK. (Barriers to the Settlement and Integration)

2.3.1. Mental Health

Mental health refers to a person's cognitive, behavioural, and emotional well-being (Herman and Jané-Llopis, 2005). Mental health struggles can hinder an individual's ability to concentrate and learn, affecting attention, memory, and information processing. Educational providers must adopt innovative approaches to make lessons engaging and effective for Afghan immigrants, enabling them to participate in the community, seek employment, navigate daily life, and access formal education, leading to overall well-being and integration (Nasimi, 2022).

When considering the needs of refugees specifically Afghan refugees already face traumatic experiences due to the withdrawal of the international community and the collapse of Afghanistan impacting their well-being and mental health (ThriveLDN, 2023). 61% of asylum seekers residing in the UK face severe mental distress (Refugee Council, 2023) Furthermore, refugees are reported to have five times higher likelihood of mental ill health compared to the general UK population (Refugee Council, 2023).

However, despite the support provided, these efforts often prove ineffective due to the profound and traumatic experiences endured by refugees. Individuals have suffered

significant losses, including their homes, jobs, financial resources, and their home country itself. Many have endured unimaginable violence, torture, and witnessed bloodshed. Even upon reaching the UK refugees continue to face overwhelming anxiety and concerns stemming from homelessness, the complex asylum process and their experiences of isolation in hotels or temporary housing (Alemi, 2020). They frequently worry about finding suitable accommodation, language barriers and challenges navigating the legal system. Furthermore, many young refugees are burdened by the fear of unemployment in a challenging job market. Additionally, there is a constant worry about loved ones left behind or missing, further exacerbating distress (Refugee Council, 2023). It is evident that the settlement and integration journey for refugees is fraught with multifaceted challenges, extending beyond their immediate physical needs and encompassing profound psychological and emotional well-being. Addressing the implications of racism and discrimination is vital to understanding the holistic experience of refugees as they seek to rebuild their lives in a new country (Cerna, 2019).

In the Afghan community, there exists a generally unfavourable perception of mental health and stigma primarily due to a lack of awareness. The term "mental health" is relatively unfamiliar, and individuals may not possess the appropriate vocabulary in their native language to express concepts such as depression, anxiety, and isolation. Some individuals perceive mental health conditions through a religious lens, interpreting them as divine punishment. Consequently, they often seek solace and answers within their religious beliefs during times of hardship, rather than seeking support from family, friends, or professionals (Nasimi, 2022). It could be argued that some individuals are therefore 'doubly' vulnerable, both more likely to experience

mental ill health due to their experiences of migration and less likely to be able to ask for help, or to get help.

2.3.2. Economic Challenges

The UK economic landscape of migration is influenced by several factors including the post-Brexit migration system, the overall net migration figures, and the effects of immigration on the economy. The post-Brexit migration system came into effect in January 2021 (CEPR, 2021). This system replaced the previous arrangement of free movement, which allowed citizens of European Union (EU) member states to move and work freely within the UK (Federico and Baglioni, 2021). The new approach is based on a points-based system of work visa eligibility criteria (Sturge, 2022) and eliminates this privilege for EU citizens (GOV.UK, 2022). Applicants must meet specific standards to be eligible for a visa. Unlike the previous system, which sought to limit all immigration, the current approach encourages skilled migration.

When immigrants arrive in a new country, they face the challenge of establishing themselves. This includes finding accommodation, finding work, and overcoming language barriers and job discrimination (Credit, 2022; NYS-IA, 2023). Immigrants may suffer financial difficulties because of the high cost of living and the necessity to support themselves and their families. These financial difficulties might have an impact on their whole settlement experience and make it more difficult for them to establish themselves in their new community (Gladwell, 2021). Governments and communities must provide assistance and resources to help immigrants overcome these obstacles and attain economic stability (The Catalyst, 2021).

Young people migrating to the UK are also influenced by migration policies and the overall economic climate. They may face obstacles in accessing education, finding employment, and integrating socially due to limited resources, discrimination, and a challenging job market (Rahimi & Berggren, 2019). Economic factors, such as financial challenges and difficulties in securing stable jobs, can impede their integration into their new communities (Yates et al., 2019). It is crucial for policymakers and communities to address these challenges and provide support systems to facilitate the successful settlement and integration of young Afghan immigrants in the UK.

2.3.3. English Language Challenges

While the diversity brought by varying languages and cultures enriches society collectively, mastering the language of the host country is imperative. Language proficiency stands as a crucial factor for the migrant's economic, political, social, and cultural integration (Adserà and Pytliková, 2016; Kuschel et al., 2023). Nonetheless, the acquisition of language, coupled with the adaptation to a new culture, has consistently presented itself as one of the principal challenges encountered by adult migrants (Schott and Henley, 1996). Migrants who do not speak English proficiently often find themselves facing perceptions of discrimination, or at the very least, are unable to fully utilize the facilities and opportunities available in the host country (Durieux-Paillard and Loutan, 2005). Immigrants' limited English ability can impede efficient communication and social contact with native English speakers, making it difficult for them to develop connections, build relationships, and participate in community activities (Emily, 2022).

2.4. Role of Youth Work in Supporting Afghan Immigrant Integration in the UK

The main goal of youth work is to help young people grow and develop in all areas of their lives (Rose, 2019; Carmen et al., 2022). Youth workers support young people's personal, social, and educational development. They empower young people to find their voice, have a say in their communities, and become active members of society (Welsh Government, 2019). Youth work involves a variety of activities and interventions aimed at engaging, empowering and enabling young people to reach their full potential and achieve success in various aspects of life (National Youth Agency, 2019).

In the United Kingdom, one of the key roles of youth work is to provide a secure and supportive environment for young people to express themselves, explore their interests, and develop important life skills. Youth workers serve as mentors, guiding and supporting young people as they face challenges and issues in their lives (Council of Europe, 2023). This involvement promotes a sense of connection, social responsibility, and civic engagement in and with young people. Youth work also serves as a link between young people and other services, organizations, and resources. Youth workers engage with schools, community organizations, and local governments to ensure that young people have access to educational resources, job opportunities, health care, and other necessary resources. They advocate for young people's needs and interests, working to establish inclusive and fair opportunities for all (Ord et al., 2022).

In Wales, youth work is built on the voluntary interaction between youth workers and young individuals. The Youth Service, which is available to all young people aged 11 to 25, is a universal entitlement in Wales (Youth Work in Wales Review Group, 2018). This approach in Wales is guided by five core principles known as the pillars of youth work: educative, expressive, participative, inclusive, and empowering (Youth Work in

Wales Review Group, 2018). These principles form the foundation for youth work activities and interventions in Wales, aiming to foster the personal and social development of young people through engaging them in various activities such as sports, arts, and volunteering (Davies, 2015).

Youth work plays a significant role in facilitating the integration of immigrants in Wales, United Kingdom (UK). Through its various activities and interventions, youth work supports the settlement and integration process of young immigrants, helping them become active and engaged members of society (Piguet, Kaenzig and Guélat, 2018). Supporting and guiding young Afghans is an essential part of youth work in Afghan immigrant assimilation. Youth workers serve as mentors and facilitators, informally assisting with language learning, educational support, and navigating the complexities of the UK system. Youth work assists young Afghan immigrants in overcoming problems and adapting to their new surroundings by giving personalized support (Clarke, 2021).

Access to education for youth asylum seekers, refugees, and economic migrants in the UK can present various challenges. These challenges may include language barriers, limited educational resources, unfamiliarity with the education system, and legal and administrative barriers (Council of Europe, 2023). Youth work, with its focus on advocacy and linking young people to necessary resources, plays a crucial role in addressing these challenges and ensuring that young immigrants have access to educational opportunities (Dolan, 2022).

2.5.   Supporting the Needs of Young Individuals, including Afghan Immigrants, through Youth Work

Youth work is essential in fulfilling the needs of all young people, including Afghan immigrants, by offering them support, guidance, and opportunities for personal and social growth. Through their involvement in youth work activities, young individuals are empowered to express themselves, explore their interests, and develop essential life skills (Ord et al., 2022).

The arrival of many teenage migrants, particularly Afghan, in UK in recent years has brought a unique set of issues that require the adaptation and responsiveness of youth work. These young people, who frequently arrive without the backing of their families, require specialised aid and support networks. In this context, the youth sector must make substantial efforts, invest large resources, and demonstrate a desire to actively contribute to the integration of young refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and their families (Rambaree et al., 2017). Youth workers play an important role in establishing a safe and supportive environment that addresses their individual needs and supports their effective integration into society.

The development of social capital, agency, and education among young migrants is one area where youth work can have a substantial impact. The connections, relationships, and networks that individuals have access to within a community are referred to as social capital (Dolan, 2022). Young migrants can acquire a sense of belonging and social relationships by participating in youth work activities. These social links not only benefit their overall well-being but also play an important role in their effective integration into the host society (Rambaree et al., 2017).

Another key part of youth work is giving young migrants agency. Youth work develops a sense of ownership and autonomy among young migrants by giving possibilities for involvement, decision-making, and leadership. This empowers people to participate

actively in their communities, share their unique viewpoints, and become agents of positive change (Rambaree et al., 2017).

Education is an important aspect in the effective integration of young migrants, including Afghans, into their host nations. Education not only provides individuals with the essential knowledge and abilities, but it also encourages social inclusion and aids in their total integration. Youth work plays an important role in ensuring that young refugees have access to quality education by offering educational assistance, supervision, and opportunities for language acquisition (Hughes, 2022). This improves their chances of future employment, social mobility, and active citizenship.

Furthermore, youth employment serves as a link between young migrants and a variety of support systems and resources. Professionals in youth work interact with educational institutions, social service agencies, and community organisations to ensure that young people have access to important services such as healthcare, housing, legal assistance, and job possibilities. They advocate for young migrant's rights and needs, assisting them in navigating complex systems and processes (Rambaree et al., 2017).

2.6.   Challenges for Youth Work Supporting Immigrants in the UK

Implementing effective youth work interventions may be hindered by obstacles and barriers such as insufficient resources, cultural barriers, and a lack of access to appropriate facilities and services (Davies, 2015). This may hinder youth workers' ability to provide proper support and assistance to young immigrants. Language and cultural limitations can also make it difficult for youth workers to communicate with and understand the needs of young immigrants.

Furthermore, thousands of unaccompanied children under the age of 18 arrive in the UK each year seeking refuge without the support of family members. They are placed in the care of the local government, classified as looked-after children, and while the majority are deemed to not fit the criteria for asylum under the Refugee Convention, they are granted discretionary leave to remain in the UK until they reach the age of 18. However, recent policy changes indicate that these rights may be restricted for some. These young people frequently suffer from significant trauma and mental health concerns as a result of their experiences, which are aggravated by the rigors of the asylum-seeking and immigration processes (Chase, 2010).

2.7. Social and Public Policy: The Hostile Environment

From the indefinite detention of migrants, latterly on a barge Bibby Stockholm off the Dorset Coast (BBC News, 2023), to the contentious requirement of a high-income threshold for sponsoring foreign spouses, the UK is known for its strict and rigorous approach to controlling the entry of foreign individuals into a country (Taylor and Land, 2014). These policies gained a reputation for being particularly exclusive and punitive in the early 2000s, fuelled by heightened levels of public and media apprehension about immigration. Upon assuming the role of Home Secretary in 2010, Theresa May played a pivotal role in implementing the infamous commitment to drastically reduce net migration to the 'tens of thousands'. (Dan and Sarah, 2019). This commitment has greatly influenced subsequent developments in immigration policy. May (2010) introduced a series of policy alterations aimed at decreasing the influx of migrants and increasing deportations. Amidst this flurry of new policies, May (2010) discussed the implementation of a 'hostile environment' surrounding illegal migration in a newspaper interview in 2012 (Griffiths and Yeo, 2021). In recent years, many countries have adopted strategies that involve local government workers, public employees, police

officers, private businesses, and even regular individuals in managing immigration. These approaches of devolution (Lahav, 2010) or vernacularisation (Johnson and Jones, 2014) are indicative of a broader shift in immigration policy paradigms. They reflect a growing recognition that addressing immigration challenges requires a more nuanced and localized approach.

Immigration enforcement has been used extensively within the United States, while it is a more recent and gradual advancement in the UK (Yuval-Davis, 2019). By establishing the hostile environment, government officials introduced social policy modifications that significantly dispersed the immigration system throughout society. The notable extent of the hostile environment's ambition is demonstrated by the assortment of government departments that were brought together following May's (2010) interview to evaluate the regulations concerning migrants' access to employment and services (ICIBI, 2016). This 'Hostile Environment Working Group' consisted of Ministers with responsibility for Immigration, Government Policy, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Justice, Employment, Housing and Local Government, Schools, Care Services, Universities and Science. Additionally, the Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State for Health and for Transport, along with the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, were part of this group (Griffiths and Yeo, 2021).

On June 14, 2018, the UK Parliament debated the impact of the government's "hostile environment" approach towards illegal immigration (UK.GOV, 2018). The policies known as the "hostile environment," which were implemented by the Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016, have the goal of finding and decreasing the amount of immigrants in the UK who do not have legal permission to stay (House of Lords, 2018). Critics have raised concerns about how these policies affect migrants and their rights.(Dan and Sarah, 2019).

The effects of the "hostile environment" policies are contested. Some believe that these policies have led to a climate of fear and suspicion within and against migrant communities. This atmosphere has made migrants less inclined to use public services and seek help (House of Lords, 2018). It is important to remember that the UK immigration policy has been shaped over a long time. The "hostile environment" policies are just a single part of the larger picture when it comes to how the UK deals with immigration (Goodfellow, 2021).

The UK unwelcoming approach to immigration did not begin with Brexit, and it was not solely introduced through the 2014 and 2016 Immigration Acts. This does not mean that the newer and stricter ways of 'immigration control' do not have important effects. People are facing problems like not being able to use healthcare, find housing or jobs, and their information is being shared among different parts of the government if they can not prove they have the right documents to stay in the UK. Even during a worldwide pandemic, the unwelcoming approach has continued (Goodfellow, 2021).

The literature review is like the building blocks of my whole study. It offers a good understanding of how people move from one place to another around the world and, in particular, how Afghans have come to the UK. Discussion considers how they settle in and become a part of this new place exploring the problems faced along the way.

This chapter has defined and discussed youth work, which is about helping young people, exploring how youth work might be able to support Afghan immigrants in the UK. This provides a strong base of literature to build upon as we explore how youth work can make a difference for Afghan immigrants settling in the UK.

In the next chapter, I explain how I actually completed this research. This includes how I identified appropriate research methods, who I involved and how I collected the

information. I will discuss any issues I faced along the way and explain how I handled them. Then, I will describe how I collected and analyzed data and the challenges I encountered. Ethical concerns will be discussed throughout.

Chapter 3

3. Methodology of the Research

3.1. Introduction

This research explored how young Afghan immigrants settle and integrate into the UK. This process is influenced by various cultural, social, and political factors (Akar and Erdoğdu, 2019). The main aim was to understand the views of young Afghan people and youth workers as to whether youth work can help young Afghan migrants with their settlement and integration.

This chapter describes the study design and methodology and explores how the research questions were translated into practice. The second part of the discussion presents the selection and recruitment of the participants and the gaining of their consent, exploring problems I encountered that caused changes to the data collection plan. The third section discusses the data collection techniques used: participant observation and semi structured interviews with participants. I reflect on how my positionality affected the way the youth participants perceived me and understood my study, and how this influenced the data collected. The fourth section describes the data analysis, illustrating the process of managing and analysing the data emerging from the field in an inductive way in parallel with ongoing data generation. The

limitations and ethical challenges emerging throughout the process of the study are discussed throughout.

3.2. Research Design

To answer the research questions outlined in the introduction section I had to place myself in the society and environment of the UK in which youth live. This assists me in identifying the actors and structures involved in their lives and how they influence their integration and settlement in the community.

This study took an empirical approach. This approach involved a systematic, evidence-based method of investigation relying on the collection and analysis of real-world data, observations, or experiences to answer research questions or test hypotheses. It emphasized the use of empirical evidence, often gathered through experiments, surveys, observations, or other data-gathering techniques, to draw conclusions and make inferences about the phenomena under study (Bryman, 2016). I chose an empirical primary data-based approach, rather than a theory or literature based secondary data approach, as taking an empirical primary data-based approach using qualitative semi-structured interviews reflected my commitment to gathering firsthand, context-specific data to address my research questions. This approach allowed me in-depth exploration, customization and gave me the potential to contribute new insights or perspectives to my research field, distinguishing it from a theory or literature-based secondary data approach (Punch, 2014).

In this study, I employed the social capital theory as a theoretical framework. Theoretical frameworks provide a structured and well-defined set of concepts and relationships that help researchers clarify their thinking and develop a coherent

framework for their study. In my study, Bourdieu's (1983) social capital theory offers a clear way to conceptualize and analyze the role of youth work in Afghan families' settlement and integration (Heale and Noble, 2019). Bourdieu's (1983) theory distinguishes between different forms of capital, including economic, cultural, and social capital. In the context of Afghan families' settlement and integration in the UK, I explored how various forms of capital intersect and impact their experiences. Social capital refers to the resources, networks, and relationships that individuals and communities have access to, which can positively impact their social and economic well-being (Lin, 2001). While the concept of social capital can be traced back to earlier works, the modern theory of social capital emerged in the late 20th century. I used Bourdieu's (1983) social capital theory to analyse the role of youth work in Afghan families' settlement and integration in the UK. Bourdieu's (1983) theory emphasizes that social capital can provide individuals with access to resources and opportunities.

Using capital theory as a framework offered a comprehensive and multidimensional analysis of the factors influencing their successful integration. This approach helps identify the diverse forms of capital, such as social, cultural, and human, that play a crucial role in shaping their experiences and outcomes (Santiago and Smith, 2018). By understanding the barriers and resources that impact their settlement process, policymakers and youth work practitioners can design tailored interventions and support systems to enhance their capital assets, considering the intersectionality of their identities and the broader socio-economic context.

3.3. Why Qualitative Research Methods?

This research adopted a qualitative approach. Qualitative methods provide the means to delve deeply into the lived experiences of Afghan people, shedding light on their engagement with youth work initiatives and facilitating the development of informed strategies for promoting their successful integration in the UK.

Semi-structured interviews allowed for a detailed exploration of the participants' perspectives and experiences, aligning with the aim of understanding the views of youth workers and the role of youth work in the settlement and integration process (Denzin, 2010). These methods provide valuable insights into the lived experiences of Afghans shedding light on their engagement with youth work initiatives and facilitating informed strategies for promoting their successful integration in the UK. In my research, I aimed to maximize the efficiency of my data collection and analysis by focusing on two key principles from social capital theory: "Networks" and "Social Cohesion." By emphasizing the importance of social connections and relationships among young Afghan refugees, I delved deeper into their social fabric (Häuberer, 2011). Firstly, I identified and understood the key social networks to understand how they are interconnected within the local community, gaining insights into the potential for resource-sharing and support (Jones, 2018). Secondly, I explored the level of social cohesion within these networks and youth work programs, examining the extent to which participants felt connected and shared a sense of belonging (Bassani, 2018; Gamper, 2022). Understanding both the networks and social cohesion allowed me to assess how youth work initiatives contribute to fostering inclusive and supportive environments, leading to increased trust, cooperation, and successful settlement and integration outcomes for young Afghan refugees in the UK. The design of my study, therefore, included interviews with six participants. I used the data obtained from the

literature review as my starting point to sensitise me to themes emerging from the data, but not as a template for the data collection.

3.4. Research Participants

The sampling strategy involved identifying four young Afghan youth between the ages of 18 and 24 both male and female who had migrated to the UK. They were immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Purposeful sampling with professional participants was used to ensure a diverse range of experiences and perspectives were heard and was also used to identify young Afghan participants who had engaged with youth work programmes. (Ackerly and True, 2008). The UK was selected as the data collection site as the researcher is currently based in the UK and unable to conduct fieldwork in Afghanistan due to political instability. However, Afghan immigrants and refugees who had recently arrived in the UK and accessed via approved gatekeeper organisations and my own professional networks were contacted for data collection purposes.

3.5. Data Collection (Semi-Structured Interviews)

Semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection method in this study. These allowed me to use a predefined set of questions while also providing flexibility to explore unanticipated insights and follow-up on participants' responses (Adams, Jones and Ellis, 2015). The semi structured interviews were conducted in person with each participant and were audio-recorded with their consent (Leavy and Harris, 2018).

Details	Number	Location

Interview Afghan Youth living in UK	4	London; Newport; Pontyclun
Interview with youth Professional	2	Newport; Newcastle

Note: the questionnaire was translated to Afghanistan local language and two interviews from Afghan youth are conducted in local language and translated to English.

3.6. Access to the Participants

The initial plan was to gather data through gatekeepers, specifically the Sanctuary Project in Newport and the University of Sanctuary project, USW. However, despite my supervisor's contacted them several time, we received no response from them. Consequently, I identified Afghan individuals aged 18-24 across various parts of England and Wales using other professional youth work networks. I then proceeded to interview them, ensuring all ethical and safety protocols were strictly followed.

3.7. Data Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews

In my research analysis, I adopted both deductive and inductive strategies that hold significance in qualitative analysis. Therefore, I incorporated elements from interviews. I utilized deductive strategies to provide structure and direction, helped me organize my analysis effectively. At the same time, I employed inductive strategies to gain a

deeper understanding of the data, allowing it to speak for itself without imposing my preconceived notions on it (Bingham, 2021). This approach ensures that my analysis remains well-organized and focused, while also allowing for the discovery of novel insights and perspectives from the data itself.

To begin the analysis, I transcribed the recorded interviews into written text and manually noted the key points discussed during the interviews. Ensuring the accuracy of these transcriptions and summaries is crucial, so I reached out to the interviewees to confirm that the notes reflected their intended meaning accurately (based on need). The interviews were conducted in English, Dari-Persian, and Pashto and then translated into English for coding and transcription. Enabling participants to engage in their home languages was essential for them to feel comfortable, for to be able to say what they meant and to include them.

Then, I employed thematic coding, a technique for systematically identifying patterns, concepts, or codes within the data. This process of codification is data-driven, allowing themes to emerge naturally from the collected data (Hesse-Biber, 2014). The analysis was an iterative process involving multiple readings and discussions with my supervisor to ensure rigor and validity.

3.8. Ethical Procedure

Ethical concerns arose at all stages of the research process, from design to dissemination (Erickson Cornish and Monson, 2018). Important ethical considerations include maintaining participant privacy, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, allowing voluntary participation, and giving participants the option to withdraw (Dougherty, 2021). I followed the USW ethical procedures, which aim to protect the rights and welfare of participants and stakeholders, minimize potential harm and risks,

promote transparency, trust, and integrity, and maintain high standards of professionalism and responsibility (Lincoln, 2020). Ethical procedures uphold the principles and values of the research community and ensure that research is conducted in a fair, just, and responsible manner.

This ethical procedure outlines key principles for conducting research with young people and children, with a focus on promoting inclusion and ensuring safety. Participants were provided with informed consent, and their privacy and confidentiality were respected. I prioritized the safety and wellbeing of participants and took steps to prevent harm. Inclusion and diversity were promoted, and power dynamics carefully considered.

As an Afghan migrant to the UK, as a Chevening scholar, I have lived experience of the barriers and challenges I faced but I am aware of services and can access support if I wish. Some of the participants appeared concerned that being involved would affect their immigration status. The consent paper was a barrier as it required their real names. This is why I gave a choice of language, using their local languages if needed, and when observing discomfort in participants I stopped the interview.

I used the USW framework for research governance to guarantee high standards of ethics legality which addresses intellectual property, data protection, and research ethics. I obtained ethical approval to maintain participant anonymity and privacy and handle study data safely. I used the guidance on concerns related to intellectual property included in the framework (USW Research Integrity, 2023).

3.9. Limitations of this Research

This study, conducted in the UK, explored the settlement and integration experiences of Afghan immigrants. However, I encountered several challenges during the research

process. Accessing participants took longer than anticipated because the University of Sanctuary did not connect me with the participants, which also extended the time needed to establish contact and build trust. Additionally, some interviews required more effort to elicit open responses, potentially affecting the depth of information shared. Cultural norms and gender dynamics played a role, as female participants declined interviews due to, in my perception, cultural stigma. Furthermore, interviews were occasionally paused or canceled by two participants who expressed concerns about the potential impact on their immigration cases, and despite explaining the entire process, I struggled to gain the trust of some Afghan youth. One participant, on the second question and sharing his experience of coming to the UK, proceeded to tell me about kidnapping and abduction in Turkey on his way to the UK. I sensed that he would become distressed, so I stopped the interview and suggested we did not proceed. Instead, we spoke together for several hours before he insisted that the interview continue. I offered ongoing support to this participant beyond the research process. Another participant in Norwich was asking questions before the interview which showed me that he was feeling uncertain. I declined to undertake his interview as I felt that he may not be fully consenting in an informed way. I reached out to more than 15 of them, but many expressed concerns about the interview potentially affecting their immigration cases. Respecting their apprehensions, I chose not to press them for an interview.

Additionally, the use of a qualitative approach, while providing valuable insights into the experiences of Afghan families and youth work initiatives in the UK, has inherent limitations in terms of generalizability. The findings and recommendations may not apply universally to all contexts or populations, and caution should be exercised when extrapolating the results to different settings or groups. I had intended to interview

more participants from different immigration schemes, as detailed in the literature review, to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges related to the integration and settlement process. However, due to time and resource constraints, I was unable to do so.

This chapter has provided an in-depth overview of the methodology employed in this research. It has covered the research design, theoretical framework, rationale for using qualitative research methods, participant selection, data collection procedures, data analysis, and ethical considerations. In the next chapter, we will delve into the analysis of findings from semi-structured interviews with young Afghan immigrants and youth workers, aiming to answer our research questions.

Chapter 4

4. Report and Discussion of Findings

This chapter explores the routes that Afghan immigrants undertake to the UK, both legal and illegal, followed by an examination of the concept of integration as a two-way street, shedding light on the importance of community and cultural connections. Mental health concerns, an often-overlooked aspect, are highlighted, drawing attention to the significant distress experienced by many immigrants in the UK. I will also explore immigrants' economic hurdles and linguistic barriers, especially in a post-Brexit landscape.

As we look more closely, the chapter emphasizes the significant role of youth work in this settlement and integration process. Through interviews and insights from

experienced youth workers, I highlight the gaps, challenges, and potential solutions in supporting Afghan youth. The chapter concludes by addressing the overarching UK "hostile environment" policy and its implications. It clears the way for discussions on potential strategies and reforms that could improve the integration process of Afghan youth, exploring the role of appropriate support from youth workers in the process of settlement and integration.

In this study, I used the "social capital" theoretical framework to guide my research. A purposive sampling method is used, accessing participants via professional networks. I undertook semi-structured interviews with four young people (aged 18 years +) and two youth workers. All interviews were conducted face-to-face except for one interview with a youth worker, which was conducted online. The young Afghans are given pseudonym names. Ahmad is an immigrant, and Joya is a refugee living in London. Mohammad is a refugee living in Newport, and Asad lives in Pontyclun, South Wales. Furthermore, the youth workers, David from England and Mark from South Wales, are interviewed.

The research Aims:

1. To explore the experiences of young Afghan immigrants in the UK with youth work programs and to identify the ways in which youth work can support their settlement and integration.

2. To identify the key factors that contribute to the success of youth work interventions for young Afghan immigrants in the UK.

3. To identify the key challenges and barriers that affect the efficacy of youth work interventions for young Afghan immigrants in the UK.

4. To examine the barriers to settlement and integration for Afghan immigrants in the UK, with a focus on the experiences of young people.

5. To provide evidence-based recommendations for youth work practitioners, policymakers, and other institutions on how to best support the settlement and integration of young Afghan immigrants in the UK.

Research Questions

1. How does Youth Work facilitate the settlement and integration of young Afghan immigrants in the UK?

2. What are the key factors that contribute to its success?

3. What are the barriers to the settlement and integration of Afghan immigrants in the UK?

4. What are the recommendations for future practice?

4.1. General Themes that Guided Interview Questions and Data Analysis

- Overview of Afghan immigration in the United Kingdom

- Global migration from Afghanistan

- Routes and Modes of Afghan Migration to the UK

- Integration and Settlement

- Integration as a Two-Way Process

- Community and Cultural Comforts: the settlement and integration of Afghans in UK

- Challenges that Afghan Immigrants face when integrating and settling in the UK. (Barriers to the settlement and integration)

- Mental Health:

- Economic challenges

- English Language Challenge

- Religious and Culture

- Role of Youth Work in Supporting Afghan Immigrant Integration in the UK

- Supporting the Needs of Young Individuals, including Afghan Immigrants, through Youth Work

- Lack of Targeted Support

- Challenges for Youth Work Supporting Immigrants in the UK

  - Challenges Faced by Afghan Immigrants in Accessing Youth Work Support:

- Trust and Consistency

- Isolation and Broken Support

- Lack of Awareness and Fear

- Barriers to Access and Rush to Integration

  - Challenges Faced by Youth Workers in Understanding and Assisting Afghan Immigrants:

- Cultural Misunderstandings

- Proactive vs Reactive Support

- Social and Public Policy: The Hostile Environment

Unanticipated findings, that differed from the above, are identified and analyzed by theme in this report and discussion of findings.

4.2. Overview of Afghan immigration in the United Kingdom

4.2.1. Global migration from Afghanistan

Many Afghans have been leaving their country recently because of many problems. According to Mohammadi (2021) the country's decades-long conflicts, political instability, economic challenges, and the withdrawal of foreign troops have contributed to a significant displacement of Afghan citizens seeking safety and a better place to live. Also, many are leaving to keep their families safe from these problems Amnesty International (2019). For various reasons, some young individuals remain hopeful about coming to the UK. The young Afghan, Ahmad, stated, "I had always wanted to move to the UK, pursue a degree, establish a decent life, meet new people, experience a different culture, and grow myself".

However, the young professional working with immigrants from different countries David state:

"I think the experience of Afghans in Britain are similar to experiences of young people from Sudan, Libya, Iran and particular Iraq. I think they very similar experiences and challenges they face in United Kingdom but people coming in past from Albania they haven't experienced the trauma and the war like those of Afghans faced".

Despite these distressing circumstances, some young Afghans, like Ahmad, view the UK not just as a refuge but as a land of opportunities, with dreams of pursuing education, experiencing cultural diversity, and fostering personal growth. This connection of avoiding trauma while maintaining aspirational goals speaks to the resilience and ambition of the Afghan youth.

4.2.2. Routes and Modes of Afghan Migration to the UK

According to the Home Office (2021) and the UK Government (2023), there are various types of Afghan migrants in the UK. These include those seeking asylum, immigrants, and refugees, to those coming through specific programs like the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy Scheme (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). The UK's ARAP and ACRS were set up specifically to help during the Afghanistan crisis.

The routes and modes by which participants travelled to the UK were at the forefront of their minds and shared with me during interviews. Beyond these two initiatives, many immigrants arrive in the UK from Afghanistan via various hazardous and unauthorized paths. Asad, a young Afghan individual who is currently an asylum seeker, explained: "I came to Iran then to Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria then Serbia, Hungary, Austria, ……. and then UK which is very difficult time. It has risk of life".

Asad was caught and hurt badly by some human traffickers in Turkey. He was let go after paying six thousand US dollars. Professionals also explained such experiences. The Youth support worker (Professional) David said in his interview, "A lot of Afghans have to travel cross the tunnel by boat or lorry and a lot of other refugees have not particularly some years ago coming from Albania and so on have come from other routes, which been very difficult, but particularly Afghan people have horrendous experience leaving their country and travelling".

Those lucky enough to be part of the ARAP and ARCR schemes get the chance to live, work, and gain of social benefits in the UK without limitations, but those who come to the UK in the way that Asad has done so have different experiences.

"When I arrived at UK, I didn't know much about how things work here. The police in Dover asked if I knew anyone here, so I told them about my cousin. Because of that, they didn't give me a place to stay or help. They left me at a train station in Birmingham, and I had to stay there all night. I asked someone if I could use their phone and called my cousin. He came to get me the next day".

Immigrants' treatment can vary widely depending on their mode of entry into the country. While the ARAP and ACRS schemes offer immigrants a structured and supportive entry into the UK, the experiences of those outside these schemes, like Asad's, can be fraught with challenges, uncertainties, and vulnerabilities. The perilous journeys traumatic experiences, and the initial lack of support upon arrival in the UK emphasize the need for a more holistic and encompassing approach to aid all Afghan immigrants, regardless of their method of entry into the UK.

4.3. Settlement and Integration

Integration as a Two-Way Process

Integration, as defined by Ager and Strang (2008), encompasses achievements in areas such as employment, housing, and education. However, according to Blanca and Penninx (2016) views on integration have evolved over time. While previously seen as a one-way process, it is now recognized as a mutual interaction between migrants, residents, and institutions. The participant Asad, a young Afghan migrant, noted this and said: "The integration is not only by us. People of UK are also having role in our integration. if they welcome us, support us, and understand us, and accept us, we will feel belonging".

Community and Cultural Comforts: the settlement and integration of Afghans in UK (Unanticipated Findings)

Upon moving to a new country, the beginning stages of settling in can be challenging. But with time, many aspects start to change. However, early challenges can leave lasting effects, including the need to move multiple times to find the right place to live. Participants stated that living in a larger Afghan community makes it easier for them to adjust. Joya states:"I live inside London and here we have a lot of Afghan immigrants and I live with family, and they all are here, and we settled here, and I live more than 10 years here I can say we are settled well". He also added that "All come down to one thing if there are other kind if there are more Afghan in place you well be rather there then a place there Is a lot of money so the settlement become easy".

His statements imply that regions with a higher Afghan population make migrants feel more at home or settled. Similarly, Asad explained: "I live in Pantycelyn where people say hello to one another but not with us. Nonetheless, the locals are nice. Due of my slight differences, I don't feel like I belong to this area or country".

Afghan refugees in hotels get support to find housing but must accept the first offer or risk homelessness, Grierson and Syal (2023). While the government intends to provide stable homes, critics believe that this plan might disrupt refugees' lives and jobs. Typically, migrants prefer areas close to job opportunities to ease integration. However, the interviews the young Afghan Asad, in his interview, felt: "Since, there are a lot of Afghan people in London, even if I get house here (in Pantycelyn) I believe I will feel comfortable in London then here".

This suggests that young Afghans feel living in areas with a larger Afghan community and that this supports their adjustment. Asad added: "There aren't many Afghans or mosques here. I'm moving to London to work as soon as I obtain the document. For

me to feel less alone and to have more peace of mind, it is not just about the money or the income; Afghan culture is also more prevalent".

Joya mirrored his view:

"I would say that in particular area that I am living there are a lot of other Afghan there are Masjid, there are food shops Halal food shops and those kind of terms that I fell home because I can eat Halal food according to my religion and there are people that I can communicate with however places such as outside London it could be much more difficult because there less number of Afghan",

Mohammad explained:

"To feel at home, I mean for things to look like that used to be like home. For instance, if you talk about London in London when you go there, there are some particular areas where there are large population of Afghan and Muslims so some of the things there are similar to the that are in Afghanistan For instance, if you talk about, let's say food, there is food available bread available that we used to eat if you talk about religions, although there are mosque here as well, but there you get the feeling people are going to mosque in an engage in a much . easier to access as compared to here.

Furthermore, Ahmad stated:

"Most Afghans reside in London since they have access to mosque, halal food, support from Afghan families and friends when needed. It is also easy to find new Afghan people. Additionally, they receive assistance from Asian Muslims and Afghans, and they also have access to many Afghan or Pakistani solicitors who speak the same language as them and can be of great assistance to those seeking Asylum. As a result, there are more Afghans in London, Birmingham, and other because they may find support and a good community or network there.

Most Afghans attempt to live in areas with a larger Afghan presence because they believe that integration is easier there and that being around other Afghans can help. This is because they speak the same language, understand each other's culture, and can help one another out. It feels more like home, making it easier to settle in. In simple words, living near people like them makes things less hard when in a new place.

Afghan youth participants' views suggest that it is evident that integration and settlement are not just about finding a place to live; they are deeply tied to cultural, social, and emotional factors. Integration, as highlighted by both young person participants Asad and Blanca and Penninx (2016) is a dual responsibility. It is as much about migrants adapting to their new environment as it is about the host community being accepting and understanding. Many Afghans, like Joya, Mohammad, Ahmad, and Asad, seek areas where they feel a semblance of home, be it through food, religious practices, or simply being around people who share their background. The importance of community support is underlined repeatedly; migrants not only look for physical comforts reminiscent of their homeland but also for a sense of community and cultural connection.

Given the importance of providing Afghan immigrants with cultural and community support, there are several actions that may be taken to improve their integration. Institutions should promote welcoming environments, which can be facilitated not just by top-down policy but also by grassroots initiatives to nurture accepting communities. Understanding gaps can be closed by including locals in activities like community gatherings and cultural exchange initiatives. Making sure that immigrants can easily access cultural touchpoints like mosques or halal food stores can also help them feel more at home. We can create a more welcoming environment for Afghans looking to start new lives in a new nation by utilizing such strategies.

4.4. Challenges that Afghan Immigrants face when Settling and Integrating in the UK. (Barriers to the Settlement and Integration).

According to the UK Government UK. Gov (2023), the settlement and integration of Afghan refugees in the UK is supported by the government in that they provide hotels, give additional assistance under resettlement plans to help migrants locate permanent housing and offer additional support to find settled accommodation on the condition, they accept the first offer made to them. However, Afghans who relocated to the United Kingdom face numerous further challenges. For migrants, it is important to be settled in appropriate place. Joya said: "Settlement and integration is connected things once you settled well you integrate easily".

Further challenges were identified in the literature and further emphasized by participants. These are:

4.4.1 Mental Health

Mental health, which encompasses cognitive, emotional, and behavioral well-being, plays a pivotal role in one's ability to focus, learn, and process information Herman and Jané-Llopis (2005). According to the Refugee Council (2023) Afghan refugees are deeply affected by their country's turmoil and frequently suffer mental distress, with 61% of asylum seekers in the UK being severely affected Refugee Council (2023).

Youth work professional David highlighted the different experiences of Afghan immigrants compared to those from other nations. He noted that while past immigrants from Albania didn't suffer the same trauma and war as the Afghans, the path young

Afghans take through Europe to the UK is filled with challenges. Corroborating this, Asad described the life-threatening risks and his personal experience of abduction. The war's repercussions in Afghanistan have deeply impacted Afghan immigrants' mental health, suggesting a pressing need for specialized support.

Asad said, "They stress for the future, and worries about things like accepting in the UK, all have an impact on our mental health". According to Nasimi (2022), the Afghan community often lacks awareness of mental health terminology, with some interpreting conditions like depression as divine punishment. Cerna (2019) argues that this cultural perspective exacerbates their vulnerability, making them less likely to seek or receive help. Addressing both their experiences and the cultural nuance of mental health is vital for effective support. David stated: "you know we talk about the mental health, and I don't think we should underestimate it". David added there's a significant need for mental health support for Afghan immigrants, especially when considering their traumatic experiences. He said:

"The needs, just to repeat what I said before to just bullet points them in the need is to support particularly for mental health because people, I don't realize that many Afghan people do not want to talk about their journeys and feeling because they don't talk doesn't mean it don't exist so we should provide kind of support possible."

The research also discovered that some Afghans choose not to disclose their personal experiences. As David commented: "For some reason they don't really want it too much to talk about what happen, for whatever reason. not all, some of them are happy to share, but most of them in my experience, is not willing to share their experience Getting to United Kingdom".

Another professional Mark stated, "Asylum seeker that mental health for example is not an area that is an option so why would somebody arriving in the UK understanding that there is support for that". This suggests that even when support is accessible, Afghans, due to a lack of mental health support in their home country, might not be aware of the availability of such assistance. Afghan refugees in the UK face complex mental health issues shaped by their past trauma and cultural beliefs. Even with support available in the UK, it is essential to raise awareness among Afghans about these services and ensure the agencies and professionals working with young Afghan immigrants understand their specific needs.

4.4.2. Economic Challenges

The post-Brexit migration system, introduced in January 2021, marked a significant shift in the UK's approach to economic migration. Instead of the previous free movement granted to EU citizens, the system now prioritizes points-based work visa eligibility, as referenced by CEPR (2021). As Credit (2022) and NYS-I (n.d) point out immigrants in the UK encounter a myriad of economic hurdles including housing, employment and language barriers. Such obstacles, intensified by the increased cost of living, often hinder their integration, a sentiment underscored by Gladwell (2021). Rahimi and Berggren (2019) stress that young Afghan refugees, in particular, face challenges accessing education and fitting into a demanding job market. For their smooth transition and integration, the Catalyst (2021) suggests that comprehensive support is essential.

Participants shared similar perspectives. With familial expectations back home and limited employment opportunities, financial challenges exacerbate feelings of isolation and stress. Asad shared his experience: "I have a financial problem because I live

with my cousin and the government is not giving any kind of support including financial support. My cousin's life is also currently difficult because he doesn't have a job". He also added "I will feel home or settled when I get UK documents and I get work here. They allow me to work".

Economic challenges play an important role in the integration of Afghan refugees, such as Asad, in the UK. Relying on family and without having government support, they encounter increased financial pressures. Legal barriers to employment further deepen their feelings of not belonging to the country. For individuals like Asad, obtaining legal status and the ensuing opportunity to work isn't just about financial support; it's crucial for feeling connected and integrated in the UK society.

Ahmad discussed the various ways in which sports can contribute to integration, but he also pointed out a financial challenge related to buying cricket equipment. He said, "My family does not play sports, so they were unable to help me in the process of joining the club and also had financial difficulties because sports equipment is expensive, and you must pay to join a cricket club".

Alongside facing personal challenges in the UK, many also have families back home relying on them, adding pressure. This can sometimes push them towards under-the-table jobs that pay less and do not require tax contributions. Supporting their families compound their struggles, and long working hours further distance them from the broader society, leading to increased isolation.

Ahmad added "Their family back home in Afghanistan also want them to earn money and give it to them, which puts emotional strain on them and might result in drug usage or other illicit activities. They also have to provide for their families back home in Afghanistan because if they don't, they won't have enough food to eat".

Mohammad echoed similar concerns, highlighting how the burden of supporting families back home can lead to undocumented work, financial strain, and prolonged isolation from broader society.

He said:

'I think many Afghans, who are here they tend to work rather than focus on education. which is for many reasons, and for some of them, they have to earn money, and for some of them, they have to support their families back in home, so I see people who have come here alone. All their family members are still back in Afghanistan and the financial condition in Afghanistan is not very good, so they have to support their families and have to focus on their work which leads them to work a lot sometime that affects their even work for more than a standard work hour at affect their physical is mental well-being".

On a related note, Joya pointed out that because of financial constraints, many Afghans prioritize earning over genuine employment, stating:"it is really easy to go off the education for Afghan the thing is the money is issue for everyone and they can literally mistreat and miscommunicate them and lead them to working stuff where they should be studying".

Those competent Afghan, who are educated, find job hunting hard since job hunting is different than job hunting in Afghanistan. Mohammad said, "it takes time to understand and know the culture of finding job which is another challenge".

Personal stories from Asad, Ahmad, Mohammad, and Joya reveal the struggles of Afghan immigrants in the UK, balancing familial obligations back home with financial and cultural challenges in their new environment. For effective integration, the UK needs tailored support mechanisms addressing these unique hurdles, including

specialized job assistance, financial programs, and not just economic stability but also cultural understanding and emotional support.

4.4.3. English Language Challenge

Acquiring proficiency in the English language is a fundamental aspect of integration for migrants in the UK. As Adserà and Pytliková (2016) and Kuschel et al. (2023) highlight language proficiency is key to economic, political, social, and cultural assimilation. Adapting to a new culture and language remains a significant challenge for many adult migrants. Furthermore, according to literature (Durieux-Paillard and Loutan, 2005) non-native English speakers often face perceived discrimination if they struggle with the language, limiting their access to resources and opportunities. Chick (2023) and Fernández Reino (2019) both underscore the importance of English communication for job and education access in the UK, emphasizing its role in societal adaptation and participation. Moreover, possessing strong English skills not only facilitates better participation in society but also aids in forging meaningful connections and relationships with native speakers.

Joya talked about challenges that Afghan face in UK in not understanding English. "one another thing is language because back in Afghanistan the language is completely different, and you do not understand what someone is telling". He emphasized the role of the English language in their integration process, highlighting the connection between sports, youth work, well-being, and English language. As Joya remarked,

"For me school and stuff were challenging because I didn't know the language well so the youth work was kind of break to play football and make friend because football is teamwork so you can make friends easily. For me to get to know people and to communicate and learn and understand the language, it gave me a big boost".

Ahmad discussed the challenges faced and emphasized the significance of language for academic pursuits and overall integration. He argued that:

"They are unable to overcome their language barriers. Only three people out of a hundred can solve their own problems in English. They are unable to continue their studies in colleges due to age and language requirement. They should receive language instruction in schools and colleges, but there are none that will help Afghans learn English, even though it is the English language that facilitates their integration and settlement in the UK". He added "language is the foundation for education, employment, and financial issues, places where Afghan immigrants live should offer English language classes".

Mohammad also talked about the barriers of English language, stating "I didn't know the language very well, so I had a language problem" He also said, "the most significant challenges that Afghan face is language". Asad also pointed out the importance of the language in integration, "I do not know the language very well, the culture and do not feel at home". The youth professional participant, David, emphasized the importance of the English language for accessing services. He particularly highlighted the challenges young Afghans face in this regard: "It is very difficult very very difficult go into the building for the first time and don't know anyone there, and don't understand the English".

During a discussion with David, a professional who works with young people, the differences between working with Afghans and other immigrant groups were highlighted. He noted that it's easier to work with those who understand English or for whom English is their first language. He stated: "I feel that was probably easier to work with certain groups over others perhaps similarity and religion and first language has been used and so on, so the main difference is usually the language and ability to speak English".

English proficiency stands out as a fundamental pillar for the integration of Afghan migrants in the UK. While literature emphasizes its centrality in holistic integration, experiences shared by Joya, Ahmad, Mohammad, and Asad as well as professionals working with Afghans, emphasis the real-world challenges and the connection of language with other aspects of life, like sports and education. The narratives reveal both the immediate barriers faced due to language and the systemic gaps in support adapted for Afghan migrants. It is vital for UK stakeholders to offer English language programs designed for Afghans, integrating community activities like sports to encourage inclusivity. Collaborating with Afghan community leaders can ensure cultural sensitivity, while mentorship initiatives with native English speakers can enhance language learning.

4.4.4. Religious and Culture (Unanticipated Findings)

In the discussion on "Community and Cultural Comforts: The Settlement and Integration of Afghans in the UK," of this chapter above, the discussion revolves around the preference of Afghan migrants to settle in areas with a significant Afghan presence due to their strong cultural and religious ties. While this sense of community

and cultural familiarity is considered positive, it can also pose challenges to the integration of Afghan migrants into new communities. Regarding the cultural difference the young Afghan Joya said.

"So far British culture is good but I totally different then what we do back in home, how we rase our children. I can see because I am raised here so I have good idea of both culture people's kids. So, one of other reason is culture that we have in London then countryside there are more Muslim in area there are more Halal food and halal shop and Eid".

Ahmad in his early school days had a conflict with a boy who shoved him, leading to a fight due to cultural misunderstandings. In Afghanistan, shoving is seen as an act of aggression, unlike in his current school setting. Despite explaining his actions as self-defence based on his cultural background, he was detained for two days without being informed about the school's rules or guidelines. He said that "The detention affected me so bad, and I was very upset, feeling not good about going to school".

Ahmad also said that in Afghanistan, cultural norms prohibit friendships between boys and girls and there is no education in schools, and you cannot have open discussion with teachers and elders, it is seen as disrespect. In contrast, British culture permits these interactions, highlighting significant cultural differences between the two societies. He added that:

"It was quite tough for me for a while to watch girls talking to boys and watching them play with boys. I didn't want to go to school after the first week since I felt awkward approaching people especially female teachers and going to the ground with girls to play cricket and football. But with time, it became normal for me to play with and talk

with girls.". He also said, "Given that religion and culture are two very sensitive subjects in Afghanistan".

Asad feels British culture is considerably different from Afghan, especially in terms of clothing and social norms like weddings, but living in a small town in Wales, his interactions are limited, and he does not understand much about British culture. He notes that cities with larger Afghan populations, like London and Birmingham, might have different culture than here. Mohamad also emphasized the absolute differences between British and Afghan cultures. He had a limited understanding of British culture. However, over time, he began to adapt and become more adjusted to it. He spoke:

"It's a cultural thing when I say I feel at home it's all about culture although I have been here but I still haven't been used to the culture still there's a lot of things that I don't understand about the culture yet so that's one thing that is getting better and I'm getting used to it so it will take time".

The youth worker David shared one of the stories regarding Khan who came to the UK two years ago:

"He was wearing national clothes, and he was attacked by a group of young people. They were making fun of him that you are wearing dress and so on and Khan was taken to explain and one of the girls punched him. One of the neighbors saw and called the police, so they arrested Khan. They put it in the police cell for 12 hours, at this time his English was not very good. They keep him for the cell for 12 hours. They didn't call the social worker; they did not call the interpreter and after 12 hours they let him go without any further action".

Cultural and religious facilities significantly influence the integration of Afghan youth in the UK. In cities with fewer Afghan residents, the lack of amenities like mosques and

Halal shops makes integration more challenging. Areas with these facilities make integration smoother. While being among Afghans offers community support and understanding of Afghans' issues and pain, the preference for Afghan-populated areas stems more from the availability of religious and cultural amenities. This is not just about current needs; there is also concern about preserving cultural and religious values for future generations. Mohammad said:

"I'm settled in South Wells but sometime I think about moving to other cities when I think about my children so that also that could be one of the factors that I moved to those cities that I mentioned they will be in a community where they will learn their culture be among Afghans be engaged And get the culture of Afghan, and I also have the access of to some of the community, etc".

Ahmad, Joya and Asad emphasize the significance of Afghan families in the UK having access to employment, housing, language support, schools, mosques, Halal food, health care, parks and other basic support but suggested but while looking to these should consider the children need too and said about children needs. Ahmad emphasised "The needs of their children, particularly availability of parks (playground) and children who speak the same language as they do".

The experiences of Joya, Ahmad, Asad, Mohammad, and the incident reported by youth worker David highlight the extreme cultural and religious differences that young Afghans face while integrating into the UK. Misunderstandings arising from these differences have led to serious consequences, such as clashes and unjust arrests. While Afghan migrants show adaptability over time, it's evident that mutual understanding between both communities is crucial. To bridge this gap, it's recommended to introduce cultural exchange programs, provide cultural sensitivity

training for public service workers, offer integration workshops to Afghan migrants, support Afghan community centres for cultural preservation and learning, and establish mentorship programs to help Afghans navigate societal norms in the UK.

4.5. Role of Youth Work for Afghan Immigrant Integration in the UK

Youth work in the UK, as described by Rose (2019), aims to nurture young individuals in all facets of their development. This involves assisting them in personal, social, and educational growth, empowering them to be active community members Welsh Government and National Youth Agency (2019). Youth workers act as essential mentors, especially for immigrants such as young Afghans, helping them navigate the UK life, including language and educational challenges Council of Europe, (2023) and Clarke (2021). In Wales, youth work, grounded in voluntary interaction, focuses on the principles of education, expressiveness, participation, inclusivity, and empowerment (Youth Work in Wales Review Group (2018) and Davies (2015). Furthermore, for young asylum seekers and refugees, youth work is pivotal in overcoming educational challenges, from language barriers to unfamiliar systems Council of Europe (2023) and Dolan (2022). In concentration, youth work is an influential force in integrating young Afghan immigrants into the UK. David said:

"Youth work can very effective. There are more examples in the country which been very effective where refugees are targeted by the youth organizations, but it is very very rare. I think if the proper resources are there, and the proper training was there, I think it can play a significant role". David, with extensive experience as a youth worker in London and Newcastle, emphasized the lack of youth services due to government cuts. He believes these services could be beneficial if available. Despite this, he notes

that Afghan youth in Newcastle remain active in sports like crickets and gym, which are not belong to youth services.

Mark, a professional youth worker with years of experience with young people in Wales, emphasized the importance of integration for refugees and asylum seekers through football and shared the process of integration through football and youth work.

"There were suggestions of making a refugees and asylum seeker football team but instead of doing that we made links with local football teams and try to have play with refugees and asylum seeker footballers going join those teams and attend training, and the idea was to integrate with team of local to be part of that team apart of being segregated and being oh that is team of refuges or asylum seeker so that was big part of the integration and now we got boys playing for local team"

Youth work in the UK is vital for nurturing and integrating young immigrants, especially Afghans, into society. However, there is a gap in youth services due to government cuts. Despite this, Afghan youth are eager to integrate, as seen in their participation in sports in Newcastle. Mark's approach, integrating Afghan youth into local football teams, highlights a successful method of promoting assimilation. The UK should reinvest in youth services, especially for Afghan immigrants, and diversify integration activities beyond sports. Specialized training for youth workers and feedback systems will enhance support and adaptability. Collaborations with local entities can foster more holistic support and integration opportunities for these youth.

4.6. Supporting the Needs of Young Individuals, including Afghan Immigrants, through Youth Work

Youth work is pivotal in supporting young people, especially Afghan immigrants, by offering mentorship, guidance, and opportunities for holistic development National

Youth Agency (2019) Ord et al. (2022). In the UK, youth work emphasizes principles like education, expression, and empowerment, which cater to the unique needs of these young migrants Youth Work in Wales Review Group (2018) and Davies (2015). Given the influx of young refugees, there's an accentuated need for specialized aid from the youth sector, focusing on areas like fostering social capital, providing a sense of agency, ensuring access to quality education, and linking these refugees with essential resources Rambaree et al. (2017) and Hughes (2022).

4.6.1. Lack of Targeted Support (Unanticipated Findings)

The data collected shows that, for example, Joya mentions his engagement with YMCA and occasional sports activities with support from young people. Ahmad expresses his initial lack of knowledge about available resources and his non-participation in youth work activities. Asad discusses his understanding of youth work and his unawareness of youth work programs in the UK. Mohammad shares that he was not aware of such programs and did not participate, expressing the potential benefits of participating in youth work programs, such as making connections and receiving support for integration. These insights highlight the weak levels of awareness and engagement with youth work among Afghan immigrants and suggest that participation in such programs can positively impact their integration experiences.

David expresses a strong concern about the state of youth work in the UK, highlighting its weaker response. He points out that the current structures of youth work are almost absent, "I think the response from the youth sector is very very weak. I think there are several reasons, the youth sector is not estimated, It's nothing more left of it".

He explained that youth programmes are now managed by volunteer-based organizations, which often lack the necessary skills or resources to adequately support

refugees. While some larger cities may have a few organizations with better provisions, places like Newcastle and other smaller towns lack these resources. Government bodies and local authorities might not be doing enough to target and address the specific needs of Afghan youth. Mark mentioned, "I don't think kind of local authority government perhaps doing enough to target those groups it should be more targeted". Regarding support mechanisms, Mark said, "This question is probably the same as it would be for British born young people the support is available if something is identified as a need for the support". He added that Afghan immigrants should receive support like British-born youth. If a youth faces issues like homelessness, various agencies, including social services and housing authorities, should step in. Youth workers should address the unique needs of every young individual, regardless of their background.

4.7.   Challenges for Youth Work Supporting Immigrant in the UK

Youth work interventions, vital for supporting young immigrants, face challenges such as budget constraints, cultural barriers, and inadequate facilities Davies (2015). These obstacles can impede youth workers' capacity to assist effectively. Moreover, language and cultural differences can further complicate communication and understanding between youth workers and the young immigrants they serve. In terms of challenges, two primary types are evident. The first relates to the challenges youth workers face regarding their capabilities and understanding of the needs, culture and providing appropriate support required for Afghan immigrants. The second set of challenges are within the Afghan young immigrant community that prevent youth workers from effectively intervening.

4.7.1. Challenges Faced by Afghan Immigrants in Accessing Youth Work Support:

4.7.1.1. Trust and Consistency (Unanticipated Findings)

One of the significant challenges young Afghan immigrants' faces is the constant relocation and their interactions with numerous authorities. This has made trust-building quite challenging. David talked about Khan and said,

"He arrived at Dover then he went to some center and then they sent Balancatway and they sent him to Coventry they sent two and now they are in Newcastle so he already had to deal with so many different people and authority. You know, I don't think, he knows whom he can really really trust."

David also mentioned that the frequent relocation not only disrupts their trust but often leads to feelings of isolation, especially if family or familiar faces are spread across different locations."For example, Khan has cousin who is lives in other city. He have somebody in other city, but he doesn't see them. He doesn't have that contact it is about being in isolation they face."

The first contact Afghan youth have upon arrival is often with the police, which might not set the right tone for trust. Mark said: "They will first contact with the police. The police are the first people they meet when they are checked in".

4.7.1.2. Isolation and Broken Support (Unanticipated Findings)

Immigrants often feel isolated, and their contact with services can be fragmented. David states, "It is about being in isolation they face but to get the trust, and not to have faith on somebody. There are eight people involved with him at the moment,

there is a social worker, the housing worker, the solicitor the support agency and youth

worker and have different support every day so it's very very difficult."

This statement highlights the confusion and fragmentation of services faced by

immigrants. Furthermore, Mark expressed that young immigrant prefers to remain

quiet, avoiding interactions with professionals due to concerns that sharing their issues

might negatively impact their status. This mindset often prevents them from seeking

available help, perpetuating their difficulties in the integration process.

4.7.1.3. Cultural and Religious Barriers (Unanticipated Findings)

David shares instances where Afghan immigrants face cultural barriers. For example,

Afghan immigrants may feel uncomfortable accessing support from places like

churches due to religious reasons, as indicated by David's quote, "So maybe because

of culture in religious many Afghans, don't feel good going to the church". Given that

anecdotal information and observation suggests that many UK based refugee charities

are founded by Christian organizations this may pose a barrier for Muslim immigrants

accessing support.

There are instances where understanding and respecting Afghan cultural norms is

crucial, like greetings and gender interactions, and getting it wrong can alienate the

youth. Mark said: "I previously worked with in youth work, but with a different group, I

work with female asylum-seekers, and when they attended the meeting, the dad came

with them".

4.7.1.4. Lack of Awareness and Fear (Unanticipated Findings)

 The immigrants often do not know about the available services or are afraid to access

them. David mentions, "they don't want to draw the attention to themself asking for

help. They don't want to have conversation with professional because they are worried...". This represents the hesitation of immigrants to seek assistance. Afghan immigrants might not always be proactive in seeking out assistance due to a lack of awareness or trust. Mark mentioned, "I don't think it should be up to the young people for the immigrants themselves to be seeking that support because they don't know it is there".

4.7.1.5. Barriers to Access and rush to Integration (Unanticipated Findings)

Afghan immigrants face barriers in accessing facilities, with David noting the existence of "barriers to access." For instance, despite the availability of facilities at a big college in Newcastle, the uptake by Afghan immigrants is very low. There can be a rush to integrate Afghan youth into activities they might not be ready for due to language or cultural barriers. Mark said, "Issues would be trying to rush, trying to force the people to integrate before they are ready".

4.7.2. Challenges Faced by Youth Workers in Understanding and Assisting Afghan Immigrants:

4.7.2.1. Cultural Misunderstandings (Unanticipated Findings)

Afghan immigrants come with their cultural backgrounds and beliefs, which sometimes clash with UK practices. There's a need for youth workers to have cultural sensitivity. David stated: "There must have a kind of good understanding of youth work principles, ethics and morals, and they must have be able to listen. They must not be judgmental, and all these things, but on top of this, all, they must have a great level of sensitivity understanding of cultural differences."

There is no organized, formal training for understanding the different cultures, resulting in a reliance on personal interactions and self-driven research. Mark mentioned: "Any knowledge would be gained through looking in your own spare time researcher in your spare time".

4.7.2.2. Proactive vs Reactive Support and Feedback system (Unanticipated Findings)

Mark emphasizes the need for organizations to proactively reach out to vulnerable immigrant groups, instead of expecting them to seek our assistance. "I think it should be up to the organization reaching to those groups".

Feedback is regularly gathered, mostly verbally, to tailor activities and programs. Youth work should be led by the young people's expressed needs and desires. Mark said "This report is used for designing our future activity and this was the idea of the youth work should be led by the young person".

Youth work for immigrants in the UK, especially for Afghan youths, is an intricate intersection of social, cultural, and political dimensions. The assistance and services provided aim to ease the integration of these young individuals into a new society. However, from the data provided, it's evident that while there are structured programs in place, numerous challenges plague the efficacy of these services. Afghan youth, on one hand, struggle with issues of trust, isolation, cultural barriers, lack of awareness about available services, and fear of negative repercussions if they voice their problems. On the other hand, youth workers confront barriers of cultural misunderstandings, the absence of tailored training, and the divide between proactive and reactive support strategies.

For more effective youth work with Afghan immigrants in the UK, it's crucial to prioritize trust-building and maintain consistent personnel interactions. Cultural sensitivity training for youth workers is essential. Organizations need to proactively inform Afghan youth about available services, and a structured feedback system should be in place to continuously tailor services to their needs.

4.8. Social and Public Policy: The Hostile Environment

The UK's immigration policies have been notably stringent, especially from the early 2000s onward Taylor and Land (2014). Theresa May's tenure as Home Secretary in 2010 further solidified this strict stance, most notably with her "hostile environment" approach towards illegal migration initiated in 2012 Dan and Sarah (2019) and Griffiths and Yeo (2021). These policies, formalized in the Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016, aimed to decrease illegal immigrants in the UK but have faced criticism for their impact on migrants' rights and fostering distrust House of Lords (2018). While these "hostile environment" policies are significant, they are part of a longer-standing UK approach to immigration that remains stringent, even amidst global events like the pandemic Goodfellow (2021).

The dynamics of interaction with Afghans and other immigrants require specialized training for youth workers. As the note suggests, there is a need for an evolution in skills, indicating a broader shift in how we approach immigrant support. David mentioned "The whole skill changes in terms of the how workers are recruited and how, what type of training should be made available".

David and Mark emphasize the importance of prioritizing the voices of Afghan youth in policy decisions, highlighting the need for their experiences and perspectives to shape interventions. David underscores the critical role of trust, pointing out the

significance of consistency in youth worker engagement to foster deeper understanding. He states "Trying to make sure Young Afghan people have their voice is very important," and stresses that the relationship is "based on trust and consistency".

Skilled youth workers, according to David, act as vital links between Afghan youth and policymakers, ensuring that the concerns of the young immigrants translate into actionable policy suggestions. He believes in "having skilled youth workers who can hear their views, suggestions, and concerns in the policymaking process."

However, Mark brings attention to a significant challenge the gap in awareness. He indicates that while support mechanisms might exist, their impact is diminished if Afghan immigrants remain unaware of them, asserting, "I don't think the organization know how to reach these groups, the vulnerable groups, I don't think these vulnerable groups understand what support is available in the UK and other support in the UK they never have experience previously".

Further, Mark critiques top-down policy approaches, suggesting they might be intimidating for immigrants. He mentions, "If you mandate something through a policy, it seems very formal and quite scary". Instead, he emphasizes the role of ground-level youth workers, stating they should be central in "I think basically people need to be out there and looking what is the needed and building something base on the needs".

The UK's "hostile environment" policy made a tough setting for Afghan immigrants and their supporting youth workers. This stringent policy, with barriers such as cultural barriers and a lack of tailored training for youth workers, delays the integration and support of Afghan immigrants. Insights from David and Mark underline the importance

of trust, cultural understanding, and the need for skilled youth workers who can bridge the gap between these immigrants and the wider community.

To effectively support Afghan immigrants in the UK, it is essential to address gaps in the youth workers' training. A focused cultural sensitivity workshop can equip them with the tools to understand Afghan youth better. Consistency in personal interactions is crucial; youth services should aim to minimize staff rotations to build trust. Awareness campaigns, using leaflets and community meetings, should be conducted to inform Afghan youth about available support systems. Lastly, a feedback system, possibly through regular community forums, can provide insights into areas of improvement for these services.

4.9. Summary

The migration of Afghans to the UK is driven by many challenges in Afghanistan. The UK offers specific programs, like ARAP and ACRS, to assist during crises, but many immigrants, like Asad, came to UK on dangerous and unauthorized routes and face additional hardships upon arrival. The integration and settlement of Afghan immigrants in the UK involve complex challenges. Integration is now recognized as a two-way process, requiring effort from both immigrants and host communities. Many Afghan immigrants, as noted in interviews, prefer living in areas with significant Afghan communities, valuing cultural, social, and religious amenities which make their adaptation smoother. The emphasis on community connections suggests a need for grassroots initiatives to adopt accepting communities. Making places that respect different cultures and promoting sharing between cultures that can help Afghans feel more comfortable and accepted in the UK.

Afghan immigrants in the UK, while supported by government initiatives, face significant challenges in their integration and settlement process. Joya emphasizes that successful settlement facilitates easier integration. Mental health is a prominent concern, with 61% of Afghan asylum seekers experiencing severe distress due to the traumatic experiences they underwent in their homeland Refugee Council (2023). The Afghan community's lack of understanding around mental health compounds this issue, resulting in many not seeking necessary support. Economic challenges post-Brexit intensify their struggles, with language barriers hindering job opportunities and cultural integration. Asad and Joya express that financial stability and the right to work are crucial not just for survival but for feeling part of UK society. The English language is a pivotal integration factor, and while it is a gateway to opportunities, the lack of language proficiency is a significant barrier for many Afghan immigrants. Cultural and religious differences further complicate their integration. Afghans like Mohammad and Asad express a desire to live in places with a pronounced Afghan community presence, not just for the comfort of familiar cultural markers, but to ensure the preservation of their heritage for future generations. Misunderstandings due to these cultural divides can lead to significant consequences. Mutual understanding and bridging the cultural gap through awareness programs, cultural exchange initiatives, and support mechanisms tailored for Afghan needs can facilitate a smoother integration process in the UK.

Youth work is crucial for Afghan immigrant integration in the UK, aiming to assist their personal, social, and educational growth. However, multiple challenges hinder this process. Afghan youths grapple with trust issues due to constant relocations, cultural barriers, and lack of awareness about available support systems. In contrast, youth workers face cultural misunderstandings, lack of targeted training, and struggle

between proactive and reactive support approaches. Amidst this, the UK's "hostile environment" policy presents additional challenges. Both experienced youth workers, David and Mark, underline the need for trust, cultural understanding, and skilled youth workers. To enhance integration, there is need for tailored training for youth workers, increased awareness campaigns for Afghan youth, and a feedback system to refine services.

In the next and final chapter, I drew together the conclusions from the prior sections. I sum up the literature regarding the role of youth work in the settlement and integration of Afghan immigrants in the UK. I also explained the brief of methodology I used for this empirical study. Most importantly, I explored into the summary of significant findings of the research, synthesizing all the insights to provide a comprehensive overview.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion:

This chapter provides a summary of the previous research undertaken, explaining how young Afghan immigrants come to the UK in search of a brighter future, facing different challenges of settlement and integration. This research explored their unique experiences, shedding light on the challenges young Afghans face and highlighting

the role of youth work in supporting their settlement and integration into British society. As they navigate economic, linguistic, cultural, and many more challenges, youth work can stand out as a critical tool, guiding these young Afghans towards a smoother transition and a sense of belonging in their new homeland. The alignment of youth work with the objectives of assisting Afghan immigrants in their settling and integration has been investigated in this study.

Through an empirical qualitative approach and utilizing social capital theory, this study explored the challenges Afghan youth face and the role of youth work in the successful integration of young Afghan immigrants in the UK. Interviews with both young people and youth workers in England and Wales provided valuable insights into the challenges, experiences, and potential solutions.

Chapter Four contained a discussion of the implications of the study's findings in relation to the theoretical framework, previous research, and the central research question themes. The four main research questions are.

1. How does Youth Work facilitate the settlement and integration of young Afghan immigrants in the UK?

2. What are the key factors that contribute to its success?

3. What are the barriers to the settlement and integration for Afghan immigrant in the UK?

4. What are the recommendations for future practice?

These questions are tailor align with the aims of the research. The aims of the research are below.

1. To explore the experiences of young Afghan immigrants in the UK with youth work programs and to identify the ways in which youth work can support their settlement and integration.

2. To identify the key factors that contribute to the success of youth work interventions for young Afghan immigrants in the UK.

3. To identify the key challenges and barriers that affect the efficacy of youth work interventions for young Afghan immigrants in the UK.

4. To examine the barriers to settlement and integration for Afghan immigrants in the UK, with a focus on the experiences of young people.

5. To provide evidence-based recommendations for youth work practitioners, policymakers, and other institutions on how to best support the settlement and integration of young Afghan immigrants in the UK.

In the literature review, I began by addressing the topic of global migration trends from Afghanistan, providing a detailed narrative of the socio-political factors that drive such migrations. This transitioned into an intensive overview of Afghan immigration in the United Kingdom, emphasizing both historical and existing contexts. Here, I particularly presented the various routes and modes of Afghan migration to the UK. Importantly among these are the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy Scheme (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), two essential programs that facilitate the migration of Afghans under specific conditions. Beyond these schemes, I also undertaken into exploring other facets of Afghan migration, encompassing both legal and illegal pathways. This broader exploration delved into the stories and statuses of asylum seekers, refugees, and other immigration routes.

Following this, I addressed the complex dynamics of integration and settlement, shedding light on some challenges Afghan immigrants face during their integration in

the UK. These challenges encompass mental health issues, economic challenges, and language barriers, among others. Further, the review underscores the important role of youth work in facilitating the integration of Afghan immigrants in the UK, emphasizing its significance in catering to the unique needs of young Afghans. Additionally, the challenges that both youth work professionals face in supporting immigrants and the difficulties encountered by Afghan immigrants in accessing this support are explained. Concluding the review, I tackled the broader context of social and public policy, particularly focusing on the "Hostile Environment" policy framework.

In conclusion, this research underscores the vital importance of youth work as a bridge between Afghan immigrants and the new culture they encounter. It emphasizes the significance of inclusivity, empowerment, and holistic development in the integration process. By identifying the factors contributing to success and the barriers and the effectiveness of integration programs, this study offers evidence-based recommendations for youth work practitioners, policy makers, and institutions. I acknowledge that the implementation of recommendations is beyond my control but believe that I have set out a strong evidence base for their consideration. This research aims to ensure that the settlement and integration journey of young Afghan immigrants in the UK is as smooth and successful as possible, despite the complex challenges they face.

Discussing methodology, a qualitative research approach was chosen to understand how youth work affected the integration of Afghan immigrants in the UK. This approach probed deeply into the real-life experiences, emotions, and opinions of Afghan immigrants as well as the professionals working with them. Purposeful sampling was used, identifying participants with firsthand experience in the subject matter. The aim was to capture a diverse range of perspectives, thus a mix of four young Afghan

immigrants, aged between 18-24, and two youth professionals were interviewed. It is noteworthy that these participants were equally distributed between Wales and England. Semi-structured interviews were predominantly face-to-face. However, one interview with a youth professional was conducted online. This approach ensured participants had the freedom to express their experiences while still touching upon the vital questions.

In terms of analysis, the feedback obtained from these interviews was examined using thematic analysis, which facilitated the development of themes and codes from the discussions. Informed consent was acquired from all participants, with great care taken to protect their privacy and ensure emotional well-being. Potential challenges, like language barriers and the possible doubt towards the researcher, were addressed early by translating questions to local languages with interviews with two Afghan taken in their local language. While the qualitative approach offered rich insights, it was recognized that the findings might not wholly represent the larger Afghan immigrant populace's experiences in the UK.

The research findings as seen in chapter five provide insights into the experiences of Afghan immigrants in the UK. Afghans, driven to the UK due to conflicts and hardships at home, have varied migration experiences. Some access structured programs like ARAP and ACRS, while others traverse more precarious routes. Integration is a mutual process involving the immigrants' adaptability and the acceptance of the local community. Cultural elements, including mosques and halal food outlets, aid in their settlement. Nevertheless, many face mental health and economic challenges, which have been amplified post-Brexit with the introduction of the points-based work visa system. Language barriers, alongside cultural differences and the desire to uphold Afghan customs, can impede full integration. Youth work in the UK plays a critical role

for these immigrants, offering guidance and support. However, there is a discernible gap in specialized assistance for Afghan immigrants, often attributed to resource limitations and changing dynamics in the youth sector. They grapple with challenges like frequent relocations and initial interactions with authorities. Enhanced cultural training is imperative for youth workers to provide effective support. Additionally, the UK's "hostile environment" policy complicates the relationship between Afghan immigrants and youth workers, emphasizing the need for trust, understanding, and tailored strategies. The findings have led to a series of recommendations which are now detailed.

5.2. Recommendations:

5.2.1. Recommendations to Educational Institutions

- Educational institutions offering courses related to working for children and young people, youth development and community development, as well as other relevant fields, should craft programmes that not only include young immigrants or cultural sensitivity training but also integrate global perspectives. By doing this, graduates are better equipped to serve and understand youth from diverse backgrounds, especially when they may not share the same language, religion, or cultural experiences. It's about ensuring every youth worker can connect with, understand, and support every young person they offer support to, no matter where they come from.

- Based on the youth participants' recommendation, it will be helpful to motivate young immigrants from different countries to pursue professional courses in youth work. By doing so, they will gain the necessary skills and knowledge to

effectively support fellow immigrants who have experienced similar challenges. These individuals will be better equipped to provide culturally sensitive and appropriate support to their peers. This will also improve representation in youth work across England and Wales.

5.2.2. Recommendations to Youth Workers

- Youth workers should formulate targeted programs that are tailored to the specific experiences of young Afghan immigrants and immigrants from other countries. This involves creating safe spaces, community engagement activities such as sports, and skill enhancement programs. Given the unique challenges Afghan youth face, it is crucial for youth professionals to use a modified approach grounded in understanding their trauma, aspirations, and cultural background. Collaborations with immigration services can ensure that youth initiatives address specific pain points like language barriers or employment challenges.

- Youth organizations supporting young Afghan immigrants, as well as those from other countries, must train their teams on cultural, religious, and background sensitivities. Before any interaction, it is imperative for staff to familiarize themselves with the individual's cultural background and the current situation in their home country. This understanding is important, as it acknowledges the potential traumas these young individuals might have suffered. By adopting this approach, we can ensure that support is not just provided, but the support impacts the positive changes.

- Professionals and organisations should implement structured feedback systems that allow Afghan youths and other young immigrants to say their

concerns, suggestions, and experiences. This feedback can then be used to continuously improve and modify support services.

5.2.3. Recommendations to Governments

- Governments should create policies promoting Afghan immigrant integration while offering housing and financial assistance fitted to their specific needs such as halal shops, masjids, and other Afghans in the community. These policies should emphasize creating environments where young Afghans feel welcomed and understood. Collaboration between immigration services, youth professionals, and local authorities is crucial to effectively design and execute these policies.

5.2.4. Recommendation to Community
5.2.5.
- Communities should adopt intercultural exchanges through events like gatherings and cultural exchange programs, especially involving Afghan immigrants. Youth work can help by organizing events that bring together locals and immigrants. Activities could highlight Afghan and British traditions, such as Eid, Ramadan, New Year, and Christmas, promoting mutual understanding and appreciation. It will facilitate mutual cultural understanding and smooth integration for Afghans and other immigrants. This will also allow Afghans to meet other Afghans in smaller, less diverse communities.

5.2.5. General Recommendations

- Services should develop specialized counselling services that are culturally sensitive and tailored to the trauma and experiences of Afghan immigrants. They should offer workshops educating youth work professionals, other social

workers, and support providers about the unique challenges these immigrants face.

- Services should introduce specialized English as a Second Language (ESL) courses with cultural context, focusing on the needs of Afghan students, and integrate English language learning into activities, games, and community services to make learning practical and enjoyable, which will help in integration. This should occur across England and Wales.

- The balance of responsibility should fall to organisations reaching out to migrants rather than expecting migrants to find support. Organisations have the capacity to do so and have a duty. It is hard for migrants who are independent, with pride, and also perhaps fear or lack of information to find organisations who will help them. There are no such supports for youth in Afghanistan, so when people arrive in the UK, they do not know these services exist.

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